



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A viral illness that infects the respiratory tract and skin. This is one of the most contagious diseases known. It can affect all ages, but is most common in children. Measles was once very common, but it is now less common due to immunization.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Measles symptoms usually occur in the following sequence:

- Fever, often high.
- Fatigue.
- Appetite loss.
- Sneezing and runny nose.
- Harsh, hacking cough.
- Red eyes and sensitivity to light.
- Koplik spots (tiny white spots) in the mouth and throat.
- Reddish rash on the forehead and around ears that spreads to the body.

CAUSES

Measles is caused by a rubeola-virus infection that chiefly affects the skin and respiratory tract. The incubation period after exposure is 7 to 14 days.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Crowded or unsanitary living conditions.
- Population groups that are not immunized.
- Measles epidemics. The disease becomes more virulent as it spreads.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Immunize children against measles. Prevention is important because measles can have rare but serious complications.
- If a person has not been immunized against measles and is exposed to it, a gamma globulin (antibodies) injection may prevent or reduce the severity of the disease.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Symptoms usually subside after about 3 days.
- A child who has been immunized against measles or has had the disease will probably never develop it. A person who has been passively immunized with gamma globulin is protected against measles for about 3 months.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Ear and chest infections.
- Pneumonia.
- Encephalitis or meningitis.
- Strep throat.
- Death.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnosis is usually determined by the appearance of the spots, however, laboratory studies may be required to rule out other disorders.
- Treatment involves rest, relief of symptoms and isolation during the communicable period.
- Don't read books or watch TV during the first days when the eyes are sensitive to light.
- Use a cool-mist humidifier to soothe the cough and thin lung secretions so they can be coughed up more easily. Clean humidifier daily.
- Take morning and evening temperatures; keep a record. If fever is 101° F (38.3° C) or higher, reduce it.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics are not prescribed for measles, which is a virus. However, if complications arise, such as pneumonia or a middle-ear infection, antibiotics may be necessary.
- Don't give aspirin to a person younger than 16. Use acetaminophen instead to relieve discomfort and reduce fever. Some research shows a link between the use of aspirin in children during a viral illness and the development of Reye's syndrome.

ACTIVITY

Rest until the fever and rash disappear. Encourage a child to rest, but don't force it. Light activities are acceptable once eyes are not painful. Children should not return to school until 7 to 10 days after the fever and rash disappear.

DIET

No special diet. Drink extra fluids, including water, tea, lemonade, cola and fruit juice. Maintaining an adequate fluid intake is very important in keeping lung secretions thin and preventing lung complications.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or your child has symptoms of measles.
- The following occur during treatment:
 - High fever, accompanied by a sore throat.
 - Severe headache, even several weeks after infection.
 - Earache.
 - Convulsion.
 - Excessive lethargy or drowsiness.
 - Breathing rate above 35 breaths per minute or breathing difficulty.